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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5343
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7897
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 7787
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1306
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 002166

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MA: HOLD CHEN ACCOUNTABLE FOR CORRUPTION,
INCOMPETENCE

REF: TAIPEI 2138

Classified By: Director Stephen M. Young, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

11. (C) Summary: In a June 21 televised address, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou defended the Pan-Blue effort to recall President Chen and urged him to step down to take political responsibility for corruption scandals and incompetence in managing Taiwan's economy and relations with the U.S. In response to Chen's "report to the people" the night before, Ma questioned the credibility of Chen's response to scandal allegations involving his family. He advised the DPP not to sink with the ship and urged prosecutors be impartial and fair in investigating scandals. Ma called on the Taiwan people to support the recall, explaining that the recall effort, intended to clean up corruption, was neither a power grab nor a power struggle. Ma refused to endorse PFP James Soong's call for a no-confidence vote against Premier Su Tseng-chang. Like Chen the night before, Ma was seeking to

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motivate his base for the December mayoral elections and beyond and to bring swing voters and "Light Blue" voters back into the fold. End Summary.

Talking to Everyone

12. (SBU) In an effort to counter President Chen's June 20 "report to the people" (reftel), KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou on June 21 delivered a half-hour live-television address, titled "Recovering Taiwan's Justice and Conscience." Ma delivered his speech alone, seated at a desk in a small wood-paneled room with no flags or posters at the new KMT office building. Afterward, Ma, flanked by KMT spokesperson Cheng Li-wen and KMT Secretary General Chan Chuen-po, held a half-hour live press conference in a larger room with political slogans on the wall.

13. (SBU) Unlike Chen, who spoke almost entirely in Taiwanese, Ma made his remarks in Mandarin. In a barb aimed at Chen for playing the ethnic card, Ma explained at the press conference that, although he could have delivered his speech in Taiwanese, he chose to speak in Mandarin so that those Hakka, Aborigine, and Mainlander people who do not speak Taiwanese could also understand him.

¶4. (SBU) Ma displayed more conviction and emotion than in some previous speeches. He left no doubts about his negative view of President Chen, who, Ma said, had lost the confidence and respect of the Taiwan people. Dividing his speech into four sections, Ma addressed in turn President Chen, supporters of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the prosecutors investigating various scandals, and lastly, the people of Taiwan.

The President: Corrupt and Incompetent

¶5. (SBU) Ma accused the President of resorting to legalistic arguments while refusing to provide clear answers to questions about corruption allegations leveled against his family and closest advisors. Ma urged Chen to step down in order to take political responsibility for the ethical failings of those around him. He also criticized Chen for damaging Taiwan's relations with the U.S. and for being responsible for a decline in Taiwan's economic performance compared to the period when the KMT was the ruling party.

The DPP: Save Yourself

¶6. (SBU) In remarks to the DPP and its supporters, Ma voiced his appreciation for the party's contributions to Taiwan democracy, and urged its members to honor the party's proud past by holding Chen accountable for his misconduct. Ma said his hope was that the DPP and KMT could become "both competitors and partners" in building a clean government for Taiwan.

The Prosecutors: The People Are On Your Side

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¶7. (SBU) Ma urged the prosecutors investigating the allegations against Chen's family and administration to be courageous, thorough and impartial in their pursuit of the truth, knowing they had the full support of the Taiwan people. Ma empathized with the prosecutors, saying that as a former Justice Minister, he understood the pressures involved in investigating ranking officials and presidential relatives.

The People: It's For You

¶8. (SBU) Appealing to the people at large, Ma stressed that the KMT was not doing this for partisan advantage. In arguing that recalling Chen would not benefit the KMT, Ma asserted it would be better for the KMT to leave a tarnished Chen in power until 2008. But, he continued, Taiwan could not afford to continue spinning its wheels or tolerate corruption in its leaders. Ma pushed Chen to resign earlier rather than later, suggesting that if Chen quit now, "he might still win sympathy from the Taiwan people."

¶9. (SBU) Ma rejected any consideration of PFP Chairman James Soong's idea of immediately calling for a no-confidence vote against Premier Su should the recall bill fail, at least at this time. Ma said the KMT should spare no effort to win the recall vote, and not shift the focus of its efforts to other possible options until the recall fight is finished.

Polls Show Little Impact

¶10. (SBU) Media polls conducted after President Chen's June 20 "report to the people" indicate that the speech did not have much impact on public opinion. Results were mixed in different polls, which showed small increases or small decreases in support for and opposition to the recall motion. According to polls by the two major pro-Blue newspapers,

support for the recall motion is about 43-47 percent and opposition about 34-38 percent. According to the same polls, support for a vote of no confidence against Premier Su remains significantly lower, with just 35 percent in favor and 36-38 percent opposed. It should be noted that Taiwan media polls are useful for reference only and that polls in the pro-Blue media are somewhat biased in favor of Blue positions.

Comment

11. (C) Given the limited impact of both speeches and given the near certain failure of the recall motion, it is difficult to understand the intensity with which both sides are waging this battle. Both sides are jockeying for position as they look forward to the electoral battles of the next two years. Last night, like Chen the night before, Ma was seeking to shore up his base before the year-end mayoral elections. In addition Ma was using the medium in which he is most comfortable, television, to persuade voters that he can be a tough, principled candidate and leader.

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